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First UA: 30/24 Index: EUR 58/7924/2024 Kyrgyzstan of April 12, 2024

KYRGYZSTAN RELEASE JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA WORKERS

On January 16, police raided the homes of 11 journalists involved with “Ayt Ayt Dese” and “Temirov LIVE,” two independent media outlets in Kyrgyzstan known for investigating corruption. The journalists, including Makhabat Tazhibek-kyzy, head of “Temirov LIVE,” and Aike Beishekeeva, a 23-year-old fact-checker, were detained for questioning. Authorities charged them with making "calls for active disobedience, mass riots, and violence against citizens" based on a video posted on social media. They face up to 10 years in prison and are now in pre-trial detention. Between March 12 and April 9, six of the journalists were put under house arrest, and one was released under supervision, but their charges remain. Makhabat, Aike, and two others are still in custody.

Write to the President of Kyrgyzstan urging him to:

- Immediately release and drop all charges against Makhabat Tazhibek-kyzy, Aike Beishekeeva, and nine other journalists of “Temirov LIVE” and “Ayt Ayt Dese” media.
- Enable them to continue their professional activities in Kyrgyzstan freely and without fear.
- Pending the release of Makhabat Tazhibek-kyzy and Aike Beishekeeva, ensure they are protected from torture and other ill-treatment in detention.

Write to:

Sadyr Japarov
President of Kyrgyzstan
Presidential Administration of the Kyrgyz Republic
207 Abdumomunov Street
720003, Bishkek
Kyrgyz Republic
Salutation: Dear Mr. President,

And copy:

His Excellency Baktybek Amanbaev
Ambassador
Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic
2360 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, D.C., DC 20008
United States of America
Tel: (202) 449-9822 Fax: (202) 449-8275
Email: kgembassy.usa@mfa.gov.kg

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On January 16, police arrested 11 journalists from the "Ayt Ayt Dese" and "Temirov Live" media projects during a forceful operation. They were taken to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and were not allowed to see a lawyer while in custody. On January 30, all 11 were moved to the SIZO 1 pretrial detention center in Bishkek.

The arrests are part of a criminal investigation. Authorities claim the journalists called for disobedience and violence in a video posted on the "Ayt Ayt Dese" YouTube channel on December 13, 2023. The journalists, however, argue that the charges are politically motivated to punish them for criticizing the government.

Two of the detained include prominent female journalists: Mahabat Tazhibek-kyzy and Aike Beishekeeva. Mahabat, head of "Temirov LIVE" and married to exiled journalist Bolot Temirov, faces up to 10 years in prison for allegedly organizing riots. Aike, a fact-checker who was arrested on her 23rd birthday, could face up to eight years.

Six detainees were not involved with the projects at the time of their arrest. On March 12, a court extended the pretrial detention for eight, including Mahabat and Aike, until May 13. Meanwhile, two were placed under house arrest, and one was released under supervision. On April 9, four more were placed under house arrest.

On April 6, reports emerged that Mahabat and two other detainees were beaten by guards. The Human Rights Ombudsman and the National Center for the Prevention of Torture confirmed her injuries, but detention center officials refused to acknowledge the abuse. The General Prosecutor's Office has started an investigation into the incident.

"Temirov LIVE" has faced ongoing harassment since its inception in January 2020. In 2022, founder Bolot Temirov was deported to Russia after being stripped of his Kyrgyzstani citizenship, allegedly in retaliation for his critical reporting.

Amnesty International has noted a worsening situation for freedom of expression in Kyrgyzstan, highlighting the targeting of independent media and activists, including those involved in the ["Kempir-Abad case."](#)

Please take action as soon as possible until May 24, 2024! The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.